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Cargo and Freight Agents arrange for and track incoming and outgoing cargo and freight shipments in airline, train, or trucking terminals or on shipping docks. They expedite the movement of shipments by determining the route that shipments are to take and by preparing all necessary shipping documents. The agents take orders from customers and arrange for the pickup of freight or cargo for delivery to loading platforms. Cargo and Freight Agents may keep records of the properties of the cargo, such as its amount, type, weight, and dimensions. They keep a tally of missing items, record the conditions of damaged items, and document any excess supplies.

Cargo and Freight Agents arrange cargo according to its destination. They also determine the shipping rates and other charges that can sometimes apply to the freight. For imported or exported freight, they verify that the proper customs paperwork is in order. Cargo and Freight Agents often track shipments electronically, using bar codes, and answer customers' inquiries on the status of their shipments.

Tasks

- ▶ Advise clients on transportation and payment methods.
- ▶ Arrange insurance coverage for goods.
- ▶ Check import/export documentation to determine cargo contents, and classify goods into different fee or tariff groups, using a tariff coding system.
- ▶ Contact vendors and/or claims adjustment departments in order to resolve problems with shipments, or contact service depots to arrange for repairs.
- ▶ Determine method of shipment, and prepare bills of lading, invoices, and other shipping documents.
- ▶ Direct delivery trucks to shipping doors or designated marshalling areas, and help load and unload goods safely.
- ▶ Direct or participate in cargo loading in order to ensure completeness of load and even distribution of weight.
- ▶ Enter shipping information into a computer by hand or by using a hand-held scanner that reads bar codes on goods.

Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Cargo and Freight Agents

Work Environment

Cargo and Freight Agents may work indoors or outdoors. The working conditions vary depending on the type of employer. Those Cargo and Freight Agents working in large warehouses, shipping docks, or airline, train, or trucking terminals may experience uncomfortable temperatures or weather conditions. They sometimes work under pressure to move cargo in or out according to tight time schedules, which may be stressful. This occurs during certain times of the year, such as Christmas, when companies receive rush orders. Cargo and Freight Agents must have patience and the ability to work independently and maintain good working relationships with coworkers. Cargo and Freight Agents generally work 40 hours per week. However, they may work longer hours if deliveries arrive at an unexpected time. Shift work may be available at larger companies.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Service Orientation — Actively looking for ways to help people.
- ▶ Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- ▶ Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- ▶ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ▶ Clerical — Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
- ▶ Transportation — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- ▶ Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- ▶ Trunk Strength — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.
- ▶ Static Strength — The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- ▶ Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

What's the California Job Outlook?

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Cargo and Freight Agents				
43-5011	13,200	13,700	350	\$14.82 to \$28.00

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment of Cargo and Freight Agents is expected to grow slower than average compared with all occupations in California. Technological advances are responsible for the slower growth rate. For example, the increasing use of bar codes on cargo and freight allows agents and customers to track these shipments quickly over the Internet, rather than manually tracking their location. However, job openings will continue to occur due to increases in purchasing over the Internet, which results in the need for more shipments. Also, the popularity and importance of same-day delivery expands the role of agents.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Cargo and Freight Agents usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ High school diploma or equivalent
- ▶ Community college programs or certificates
- ▶ Vocational school
- ▶ Extensive on-the-job training

Many community colleges offer Cargo and Freight Agent certificates or degrees. Some community colleges offer courses for transportation, storage, and distribution managers.

Recommended High School Course Work

High School preparation courses in language arts, general business, business mathematics, computer technology are helpful.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search under the following manufacturing industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Couriers
- ▶ Freight Transportation Arrangement
- ▶ General Freight Trucking, Local
- ▶ General Warehousing and Storage
- ▶ Other Nonscheduled Air Transportation
- ▶ Other Specialized Trucking, Local
- ▶ Other Specialized Trucking, Long-Distance
- ▶ Other Warehousing and Storage
- ▶ Refrigerated Warehousing and Storage
- ▶ Scheduled Freight Air Transportation
- ▶ Scheduled Passenger Air Transportation
- ▶ Used Household and Office Goods Moving

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Air Cargo & Package Express Service
- ▶ Freight Forwarding
- ▶ Packing & Crating Service
- ▶ Railroad Companies
- ▶ Ships & Ship Operation
- ▶ Trucking-Motor Freight
- ▶ Trucking Transportation Brokers

Cargo and Freight Agents

Where Can the Job Lead?

Advancement opportunities for Cargo and Freight Agents are limited. However, with increased experience individuals with leadership ability may advance to a general manager or warehouse manager position. Lateral moves to similar positions such as shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks, or weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers may offer opportunities to gain additional skills.

Other Sources of Information

American Institute for Shippers' Associations
www.shippers.org

The International Air Cargo Association
www.tiaca.org

National Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association of America
www.ncbfaa.org

National Shippers Strategic Transportation Council
www.nasstrac.org